

## In-Class Writing Activities\*

### Writing to Learn...

By asking your students to write frequently in class, you can:

- Help your students realize the idea-generating potential of writing and its value *even when it is not graded*.
- Give students practice in the sort of single-draft writing expected of them in exam situations.
- Help students focus their ideas as they prepare for formal assignments.
- Discover what students understand and what is confusing to them.
- Improve your ability to give effective feedback on assignments.

### Characteristics of in-class writing

In-class writing assignments can take a number of different forms, but they tend to share similar characteristics. They

- Promote active learning
- Require limited time to complete
- Encourage discussion
- Remain mostly ungraded
- Engage all students
- May be expanded into longer, more formal assignments

## Effective Writing-to-Learn Activities

### Assignment-related activities:

<b><u>Task</u></b>	<b><u>Purpose</u></b>	<b><u>Suggestions</u></b>
Assignment Paraphrase	To ensure students understand course writing assignment.	Ask students to write a 3-4 sentence paraphrase of the assignment. Several students can read them aloud, and the class can discuss the degree to which it reflects the work they've been asked to perform.
Draft of Introductory Paragraph	To help students clarify their ideas and learn how to identify and construct a thesis statement.	Ask students to write a draft of their intro paragraph (it may be easier to have them do this outside of class and bring it in). Ask volunteers to read their paragraph aloud, and then discuss the components of a good paragraph and thesis statement.

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Progress Statement	To ensure students are working on a project or paper, and find out what help they need.	Mid-way through a project or paper, ask students to write a short evaluation of their progress, noting what they have accomplished thus far, what they are most satisfied with, what work remains to be done, and what questions they have.
Assignment Cover Sheet	Gives grader a good sense of the kinds of problems students had and makes responding easier and more focused.	On the day students turn in a paper, have them write for 5-10 min., reflecting on the paper. What problems and concerns did they have? What insights did they attain? Ask them to pose 1-2 specific questions for the grader to respond to.
Response to the Response	To encourage students to look at and consider the grader's comments.	After handing back a graded assignment, ask students to respond for 5 min. after reading the teacher's comments. Ask them to identify one strength and one area to work on that is evident from the comments.

#### Other Activities:

<b><u>Task</u></b>	<b><u>Purpose</u></b>	<b><u>Suggestions</u></b>
Beginning of class writing primer	To get students to think about the topic(s) for the day and to generate ideas for class discussion.	Ask students to spend the first 5 min. of class responding to a question that will be addressed in lecture or discussion. Let them know they will be asked to read their responses out loud, so they will prepare their compositions with care.
Closure Statements	To facilitate student learning of course materials and give the instructor feedback on discussions and lectures.	At the end of class, have students summarize a lecture or discussion, identify the key points or pose a final question.
Micro-theme Writing	To encourage students to be concise in their writing, and to give instructors quick feedback.	Pass out 3x5 cards and have students write on a specific topic. Questions or topics may be expanded into more formal essays.
Counter-arguments	To develop critical thinking skills in students by enabling them to identify strengths and weaknesses in arguments.	If an argument has been raised in class or the reading, or more than one theory has been advanced, stop for 5 min. and allow students to write down all the counter-arguments or evidence, or present the case for accepting one theory over another.